|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **Date** | **Score** | **Player** | **Setting** |
| [**1**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#1) | August 13, 1982 | 874,300 | Billy Mitchell | Live |
| [**2**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#2) | August 17, 2000 | 879,200 | Tim Sczerby | Video |
| [**3**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#3) | June 30, 2003 | 947,200 | Steve Wiebe | Video |
| [**4**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#4) | May 7, 2004 | 933,900 | Billy Mitchell | Live |
| [**5**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#5) | May 29, 2004 | 985,000 | Steve Wiebe | Video |
| [**6**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#5) | June 29, 2004 | 999,500 | Steve Wiebe | Video |
| [**7**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#5) | July 4, 2004 | 1,006,600 | Steve Wiebe | Video |
| [**8**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#8) | June 3, 2005 | 985,600 | Steve Wiebe | Live |
| [**9**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#9) | June 4, 2005 (verification date) | 1,047,200 | Billy Mitchell | Video |
| [**10**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#10) | August 3, 2006 | 1,049,100 | Steve Wiebe | Video |
| [**11**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#11) | July 13, 2007 | 1,050,200 | Billy Mitchell | Live |
| [**12**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#12) | February 26, 2010 | 1,061,700 | Hank Chien | Video |
| [**13**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#13) | July 31, 2010 | 1,062,800 | Billy Mitchell | Live |
| [**14**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#14) | August 30, 2010 | 1,064,500 | Steve Wiebe | Video |

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| **#** | **Date** | **Score** | **Player** | **Setting** |
| [**15**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#15) | December 27, 2010 | 1,068,000 | Hank Chien | Video |
| [**16**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#15) | February 27, 2011 | 1,090,400 | Hank Chien | Live |
| [**17**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#15) | May 18, 2012 | 1,110,100 | Hank Chien | Video |
| [**18**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#15) | July 25, 2012 | 1,127,700 | Hank Chien | Video |
| [**19**](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html#15) | November 1, 2012 | 1,138,600 | Hank Chien | Video |

### The Donkey Kong World Record: The Real History, From 1982 to Today

Since Billy Mitchell's epochal achievement of 874,300 points on August 13, 1982, the official Twin Galaxies-verified Donkey Kong world record has undergone a winding and controversial journey.

Four men have reigned as champion—Billy Mitchell, Tim Sczerby, Steve Wiebe, and Hank Chien—with much back-and-forth between each (except for Sczerby, who is the only of the four to hold the title just once).

(If you're saying to yourself "wait a minute... Tim who?" stay tuned. Sczerby, his score, and its omission from The King of Kong documentary will be discussed below, and elsewhere on Donkey Blog.)

Though Mitchell's original record held for just over 18 years, the 2000s proved to be an active decade for Donkey Kong world records, with six undisputed change-overs (along with four intervening scores submitted by Steve Wiebe that were ultimately unverified due to issues that will be summarized below).

The 2010s have, so far, moved at an even more chaotic pace, with the record inching higher an unprecedented eight times between 2010 and 2012.

The following table shows all of the world record-setting scores, whether or not (ultimately) verified and approved by Twin Galaxies.

The Record-Setting Games

Light scores = Accepted and verified
Dark scores = Rejected or never verified

### Sczerby (#2)

To quote [Walter Day](http://forums.twingalaxies.com/viewtopic.php?f=86&t=10574&sid=3dac12d35cd1444835782db3e3a58466):

"[Billy Mitchell's 1982] record stood until August 17, 2000 when Tim Sczerby scored 879,200 points in Auburn, NY. When Tim scored this new record, his achievement was published on the Twin Galaxies website and the story was sent out all over the Internet. Also, Walter Day, Chief Scorekeeper at Twin Galaxies personally phoned Tim and congratulated him on his great accomplishment. A few days later, Billy himself phoned Tim and congratulated him."

Sczerby's score was submitted, verified, and never under institutional dispute. However, the creators of The King of Kong, who made no mention whatsoever of Sczerby or his score in the film, have been attacked within gaming circles for their official position on the subject. In the words of Seth Gordon and Ed Cunningham: "Tim Sczerby's consistently disputed record was impossible to verify and did not merit inclusion in the film."

This statement, disingenuous as it might sound, could actually be defensible based on the impression that the filmmakers may (or may not) have been given at the time the documentary was being made. In fact, there is compelling evidence to support the position that certain individuals (including Robert Mruczek, Walter Day, Brian Kuh, Steve Sanders, and others) may be culpable (though perhaps innocently) of a failure of diligence in giving Sczerby his due, and unambiguous assurance that Sczerby actually beat Mitchell. The filmmakers may not be entirely—or even primarily—to blame for Sczerby's ommission from The King of Kong. (This, however, is a digression that will have to wait for an article of its own.)

### The First Rejected Wiebe Score (#3)

Each of the four darkened scores in the above table were initially accepted by Twin Galaxies, but all were ultimately either rejected or otherwise unverified during an arduous saga that this article (and frankly, this blogger) will not and should not attempt to do full justice.

To (greatly) simpify the matter: the Donkey Kong boardsets on which Steve Wiebe performed all of these scores were determined to be problematic.

This initial submission of 947,300, actually beat Tim Sczerby, not Billy Mitchell, for the world record. It was initially accepted and verified, but fell under dispute less than ten days after verification when Darren Harris, a Twin Galaxies forum member, noted that it had been performed on a "Double Donkey Kong" boardset (a custom-made aftermarket modification that converts a Donkey Kong Junior board to play both games, making it potentially unfit for competition due to possible gameplay differences).

Walter Day announced that if Wiebe had indeed used a Double Donkey Kong board, then his "hold on the traditional DK record would be relinquished."

Wiebe's score, however, remained in the #1 position on the Twin Galaxies website while discussion continued as to whether it should be reclassified under a new "Double Donkey Kong" category.

### Billy Reclaims The Title (#4)

Nearly a year after Wiebe's embattled submission, Billy Mitchell would perform live at the Midwest Gaming Classic in Milwaukee with a score of 933,900.

This game is actually a key event with regard to Wiebe's competition with Mitchell, one that The King of Kong omits. Wiebe's first submission (the 947,200 score from 2003) was grazed (but not beaten) by this score, and shows that Mitchell had publicly trumped his own 1982 record, beaten Sczerby, and was actively pursuing Wiebe. The film makes it seem as though Mitchell ignored Wiebe, never competed live, and sat on his hands until submitting a videotaped performance in 2005.

This score also made Mitchell the de-facto world record holder. It did not beat Wiebe's submission, but it didn't need to, since Wiebe's had now been unofficially rejected, and successive Wiebe submissions would be unverified and/or disputed for over a year. All this score had to beat was Tim Sczerby's. It did, so Mitchell was champion.

That fact proved to be advantageous for the purposes of the film, since individuals featured in the footage from the 2005 Funspot tournament, such as Brian Kuh, would—and did—refer to Mitchell (and not Sczerby) as "the champion", even though they were actually referring to a title that had reverted to Mitchell with this Milwaukee game, and not to his original 1982 score. The references to Mitchell-as-champion end up being seamless, and the viewer never suspects anything.

### The Record That Lied In Wait (#9)

Mitchell achieved a videotaped score of 1,047,200—exactly 100,000 points higher than Wiebe's initial 947,200 submission—at his home on June 7th, 2004 (one month after his 933,900 live score in Milwaukee).

The score data is long gone from the current Twin Galaxies website (replaced by Mitchell's current score), but an [Internet Wayback Machine snapshot](http://web.archive.org/web/20061122232847/http%3A/www.twingalaxies.com/index.aspx?c=22&sid=40527) of the score info page shows 6/7/04 as the performance date. (Mark Alpiger echoes this date at [Classic Arcade Gaming.com](http://www.classicarcadegaming.com/wr/true/index.htm).)

Mitchell, however, did not submit the tape right away. It would be more than a year before he (quite infamously) did so.

### More Rejection For Wiebe (#5, 6, and 7)

Meanwhile, Steve Wiebe, having replaced the hardware in his Donkey Kong machine to a proper Donkey Kong boardset, performed the latter three "darkened" scores. Like the first score, all three would run into problems, each for different reasons.

The first two 2004 submissions (record game #5 and 6 - 985,000 and 999,500) were never verified simply because the verification process was a slow undertaking. In Robert Mruczek's words, Twin Galaxies wanted to check every detail and avoid getting any "egg on [their] faces" of the sort that had occurred because of the Double Donkey Kong situation. Mruczek hadn't even finished watching the 999,500 game when Wiebe announced the first million-point game ever submitted to Twin Galaxies: record-breaking game #7, with a final score of 1,006,600.

"There it is - one small leap for Mario, one giant leap for Mariokind."
    - Wiebe, the moment he rolled the score to 1 million

Twin Galaxies was less than 48 hours from going public with the story of the new score when a bomb fell: upon an in-person investigation, Wiebe's hardware was found suspect as having been in the custody of Roy Shildt, persona-non-grata among Twin Galaxies, and someone viewed with great suspicion by the staff.

Some of the details as to the nature of the Shildt situation can be gleaned from The King of Kong. However, it must be stressed that the film should be taken with a grain of salt in that regard (and others), as it greatly simplifies, streamlines, and omits many details related to Steve Wiebe and his Donkey Kong scores.

Most importantly, of the four rejected performances, the film only depicts Wiebe's 1,006,600 performance and concatenates it with the others (games #3, #5, and #6), representing it as if it were Wiebe's first and only submission to Twin Galaxies, when it was actually his fourth (and was not, by the way, the "wipe my butt" game, which was Wiebe's first world record submission—the score that beat Tim Sczerby's).

As for the hardware controversy, only the Shildt situation is discussed in the film. The Double Donkey Kong issue is not described, except for Steve Wiebe mentioning in the film that Roy Shildt offered to replace Wiebe's boardset because the old one "broke." (This of course was not actually the problem with the DDK boardset, but Wiebe was most likely asked by the producers to phrase it that way for the sake of simplifying the story.)

### http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-iY0URmse33E/UJCveMZhN0I/AAAAAAAAAQk/vgxS9mnjv3A/s400/wiebe-over-mitchell.jpgWiebe Triumphs At Funspot (#8)

Fed up with the unverified scores, and eager to prove himself in a manner that could not be contested, Steve Wiebe traveled to the 7th Annual American Classic Arcade Museum Tournament, held at Funspot in Weirs Beach, New Hampshire from June 2nd through 5th, 2005. The King of Kongdepicts the events of the tournament, highlighting Wiebe's record-breaking public performance of 985,600, which was verified immediately.

The film innacurately depicts the Funspot game as being the firstuncontested score to beat Mitchell's original 1982 score, neglecting to mention Mitchell's score in Milwaukee (to say nothing of Tim Sczerby's original record-breaking game).

### http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-D2Lilm5kI2Y/UJCvvB__XqI/AAAAAAAAAQw/INkElBbQ6js/s400/mitchell-doris-1047-video.jpgThe Tape Emerges (#9)

A copy of Billy Mitchell's aforementioned videotaped performance of 1,047,200 was finally submitted on June 4, 2005, the day after Wiebe's 985,600 live performance at Funspot. This event was one of the definitive moments in The King of Kong.

What the film does not show is that, while initially accepted by Twin Galaxies, Mitchell's score was actually removed from the database just three days later on June 7th by head referee Robert Mruczek, who demanded a more rigorous verification. At this time, Wiebe was reinstated as champion.

Months later, after receipt and examination of Mitchell's master tape, it was at last "formally and definitively approved" on January 6th, 2006. (Mruczek himself oversaw authentication of the score.)

During the verification process, Mruczek came to the (well-supported) conclusion that the game's final score—1,047,200—was intentionally engineered by Mitchell to best Wiebe's original 947,200 submission by exactly 100,000 points. Mitchell's behavior in the game strongly suggests that the final score is not coincidental. In Mruczek's words: "[Billy] dumped points just so he could get 100K more than Steve ... This was a 1.095-1.110M game if I ever saw one, wasted for the sake of proving a point."

The matter of the actual date of this eventually-accepted performance is also one worthy of very serious consideration.

The June 7th, 2004 performance date cited by Twin Galaxies is convincing. After all, why would Mitchell fashion his game around targeting Wiebe's 947,200 score if Wiebe had already submitted scores that beat it? It makes most sense if one assumes that the game contained on "The Tape" pre-dated those submissions.

This has major implications. If one considers the date of a performance, and not the date of submission or verification, to be the date of the world record, then none of Wiebe's 2004 submissions were ever world records, nor was his 985,600 Funspot performance! They were merely "personal bests" for Wiebe, who was actually chasing a record he didn't even know existed.

Regardless of whether or not it was actually the world record, the Funspot game still stands without dispute as the highest Donkey Kong score performed in public up to that time, as well as the first Funspot kill screen.

### Wiebe Beats Mitchell For the First(?) Time(#10)

If Wiebe wasn't setting new records throughout 2004 and 2005, and Mitchell's tape made him the true record holder, then Wiebe really only broke the record once—in the original 947,200 game from 2003—and the only player he beat was Sczerby.

It wasn't until 2006 and Wiebe's 1,049,100 game—shown in the epilogue ofThe King of Kong—that Wiebe actually, officially, and undisputably, beat Mitchell for the first time.

It should be apparent by now why I am including Wiebe's ultimately-rejected scores in the table. Whether "official" or not, they are important to Donkey Kong history. Each game affected the competition, and each shows a step in Wiebe's progression, as well as his trials with Twin Galaxies submissions (which are even more difficult than the film depicts—since he actually had to contend with four scores and multiple reasons for disqualification, not just one score/one reason). They also help to convey a more accurate account of how Wiebe's rivalry with Mitchell actually unfolded.

The simplified version of the world record chase presented by The King of Kong misses much of the texture of the overall saga.

A very important point must be made here, however: while the film has been much maligned for its inaccuracies (which some have gone as far as to call malicious lies), the ins-and-outs of the record, the disputes, and all the drama thereto are difficult to follow and understand even to someone giving it their full attention. It would be unfair to put so many (often tedious and murky) details on the shoulders of an 80-minute documentary aimed at a casual, mainstream audience.

It was wise, and totally necessary, for The King of Kong to simplify the story. As Roy Shildt stated in [an interview](http://www.youtube.com/watch?&v=bpa65K3zniA): "It would be, like, a five-movie miniseries if you told the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It would take forever. So they condensed it down a little bit."

The film had a duty to be concise, accessible, and entertaining. The reality (as you might be feeling by this point in the article) is none of those.



### Billy vs. Steve, Post-King of Kong (#11)

In July of 2007, even as The King of Kong was making its way through film festivals across the country, Billy Mitchell struck back at Steve Wiebe, scoring 1,050,200 at an 80s-themed mortgage broker's convention in Florida.

There are a few things worth noting about this performance: it was displayed (with no audio) on a screen at the convention, with the video signal being fed directly from the game PCB. Mitchell was, presumably, playing from another room, but not in front of a crowd, or even a single known witness.

This score beat Wiebe's previous by exactly 1,100 points, and not by accident. When Mitchell reached his chosen score, he immediately surrendered the controls on the game, allowing his two remaining men to be killed off. After the game, Mitchell ([as reported by MTV](http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1565744/donkey-kong-king-reclaims-top-score.jhtml)) had this to say:

"I don't need to run up the score. I just want to put one in the 'win' column. I want to make it competitive. I didn't want to make it too tough."

But there was more significance here than simply "not running up the score." As with The Tape, this game came with a coded message: 1,100 is "1.1 thousand," almost certainly a reference to 1.1 million. Mitchell may have been suggesting to Wiebe that he was ready to take the top score to that level and beyond, and that the ball was in Wiebe's court to do so.

### A New Challenger Appears (#12)

It was nearly three years later—February, 2010—when a plastic surgeon from New York entered the fray. Dr. Hank Chien, known to the community up to that time only as a MAME player, submitted a score of 1,061,700, introducing new blood into a fight that had now been raging between two lonely combatants for almost a decade.

### 1,100 Again (#13)

Less than six months passed before Mitchell welcomed Chien to the battlefield by once again reclaiming the record, again by exactly 1,100 points, and again with an intentional surrender at that precise mark. Whether or not the 1,100 was meant to evoke 1.1 million, the number was now, unmistakably, a specific choice.

After the game, Mitchell commented on the points he threw away, saying simply, "Some say I'm being cocky. Some say I'm being lazy. I say, I'm being Billy Mitchell."

He went on to declare, "there's one more thing I have to take care of," and proceeded, at that very moment, to start a game of Donkey Kong Jr. Four hours later, he would reclaim the Jr. world record from [Mark Kiehl](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2012/02/number-five-already.html).

The performance, which was timed to coincide with Mitchell's induction into the Video Game Hall of Fame one week later, took place at a Boomers theme park in Florida, and has raised questions. Both the Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Junior scores from that day were recorded via direct feeds from the game PCBs, contain no audio, the tapes do not show Mitchell himself playing, and the only witnesses were personal friends (one of whom—Twin Galaxies referee Todd Rogers—verified the score).

### Wiebe's Last Stand (#14)

Mitchell held the record for just three weeks before Wiebe returned with another record-setting game, almost precisely four years to the day since his last. This game marks the fastest record turnover in Donkey Kong history. But with a fearsome new player now in the mix, it too wouldn't last long.

### Hank, Hank, and More Hank (#15, 16, 17, 18, and 19)

Chien overtook Wiebe on December 27th, 2010 with a performance recorded from home, then beat his own score two months later in February of 2011, live at Funspot, on the very same machine where Wiebe had taken the record in 2005. Chien's 1,090,400 from that day would stand for over a year.

In May of 2012, while training for [the Kong Off 2](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.com/p/the-kong-off-2.html), Chien pushed the record[past the 1.1 million mark for the first time](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2012/05/new-world-record.html) with 1,110,100. He would improve the score [two months later](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2012/08/hank-chien-world-record-august-2012.html), reaching 1,127,700.

Finally, just over two weeks before the Kong Off 2, Chien hammered the record further [for the fifth time in a row](http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2012/11/hank-wont-stop.html), bringing it to rest at 1,138,600.

Credit for most of the original research behind the data and information in this article goes to the excellent [Donkey Kong Timeline](http://superbunker.com/resources/dkt/) and [Robert Mruczek's response](http://superbunker.com/resources/dkt/robert-mruczek-2008-april-13/) at Superbunker.com.

Other information was gathered from a variety of sources, including news releases, posts on [the Twin Galaxies forum](http://forums.twingalaxies.com/), and the [Classic Arcade Gaming forum](http://www.classicarcadegaming.com/forums/). Further specifics can be provided on request, and new information and corrections are eagerly awaited.

At no point does this article mean to necessarily imply any wrongdoing, irresponsibility, or ethical misconduct on the part of Billy Mitchell, Steve Wiebe, the King of Kong film—all of which I am extremely personally fond of—or any other person or group mentioned or not mentioned in the article. This is a presentation of facts, and I leave it to the reader to decide for himself what to make of them (at least for the purposes of THIS post—I'll be happy to tell you what I think, and what you should think, in others!)

<http://donkeykongblog.blogspot.ca/2011/12/donkey-kong-world-record-history.html>